

TRAINING, INC.

A Practical Application
of Imaginal Education

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INTRODUCTION

A. Urban Unemployment

Urban unemployment today is a problem with which many are struggling and over which many agonize as they repeatedly fail to make headway against what they experience as a tidal wave of resistance. This problem is one for both the employer and the job seeker. The employer seeks qualified and productive workers in a market which appears to have neither. The job seekers cannot gain a foothold in a system which they do not understand and by which they are defeated in every effort to deal with it.

The employer is also under the requirement by law to hire minority and disadvantaged persons. They comprise the mass of the job seekers and are often unqualified and unequipped to deal with the existing job market. Employers who exercise specific efforts to comply with these regulations are frequently blocked by insufficient numbers of qualified applicants.

The ordinary person can only stand in awe of continued efforts to deal with such an insurmountable problem. At the same time, one is increasingly alarmed by the numbers of persons involved directly and indirectly in the frustrating round of unsuccessful efforts to become productive and participating citizens.

B. Training, Inc.

Now underway in Chicago, Indianapolis, Boston, Newark, and Pittsburgh is a cooperative voluntary effort to deal with this situation in a new and creative fashion. Training, Inc. is an office skills training program developed originally by staff from the Institute of Cultural Affairs and initiated through the Oak Brook Association of Commerce and Industry (DuPage County, Illinois) in cooperation with the Central YMCA Community College and the DuPage County Office of Employment and Training. Now in its fifth year, Training, Inc. is a tested educational training project designed to bring together employers who need qualified employees, and job seekers who cannot compete in the existing market. It is successfully meeting employer needs for well qualified clerical personnel with 95% retention to graduation and better than an 85% record in job procurement.

C. Target Population

The aim of Training, Inc. is not to simply supply typewriters or other office equipment on which trainees can practice, but to release the motivity that will create the drive and enthusiasm necessary for securing employment. The services of the program are aimed at people of all ages who are cut off from easy access to the job market. Many of the trainees are from minority groups, are unskilled, under-educated and have language difficulties. In

addition, a number are unsure of their ability to learn new skills and may even doubt their potential to become valuable employees. Other experience difficulties in adjusting to a new life style following divorce, the death of a spouse or long periods of unemployment.

Several problem arenas confront most of the trainees applying for the training program. In every case, there is a reason that training is sought rather than employment. First is the obvious issue of skills and their applications. Most of the participants have no previous experience or training in clerical skills. The rest have either taken some classroom typing but lack production skills, or they have done factory work with some clerically related duties; others have previously worked in an office and are returning to the job market after a long absence.

Formal education is another arena which hinders job securement. More than half of the participants have completed a full twelve years of formal schooling. The question is not how much education, but the kind of education one has. One or two semesters of typing in the tenth grade does not adequately prepare an applicant for competition in a tight job market. College level study in subjects like art, foreign languages, or literature does not significantly advance an applicant for consideration in general office work. For those without high school diplomas or GED certificates, how much education is very much an issue, after which the type of education is considered.

Employers who seek applicants with specified previous experience are likely to overlook the participant in this type of training program. Employers also screen with age in mind and consider language fluency or cultural background. For participants who fall into any of these categories, added skill levels are the best way to increase consideration for employment.

D. Imaginal Education

The methods used in this program are unique in the field of commercial training. A key factor in this uniqueness is the use of imaginal education methods as developed by the staff of the Institute of Cultural Affairs. As described by one journalist, "Imaginal education is akin to the 'total person' concept in general education today and the 'holistic' concept in medicine and psychological counseling." Imaginal education begins with and deals with the basic operating images of people. It teaches skills, but goes beyond skills to the self-image of the trainees.

The intent of an imaginal curriculum is to inspire in the trainees, images of themselves as significant and capable, of the task as learnable and doable, of the business world as human and in need of their creative participation.

Minority trainees from a disadvantaged situation often need to build their feelings of self worth and their image of themselves as capable of success. The program is structured to build self confidence through achievement. Trainees are assisted in realizing their self worth, establishing realistic goals, and in learning the necessary skills for achieving them. As trainees master the program elements, learn to accept responsibility for their actions, and work closely and successfully with the staff and trainees in simulated office situations, they develop the drive and enthusiasm needed to succeed in the business world.

The following pages are an attempt to articulate an application of these insights to a specific job skills arena in the program of Training, Inc.

II. THE THEORY OF IMAGINAL EDUCATION

The four theoretical assumptions of Imaginal Education are attributed to the work of Kenneth Boulding in his book The Image: Life in Knowledge and Society. The staff of the Institute of Cultural Affairs found in Boulding's insights the foundation for a new understanding of educational theory and has accordingly used insights based on experimentation with this understanding in all of its training over the past thirty years. The four basic assumptions are discussed in their relationship to the work of Training, Incorporated.

A. People Live Out of Images

People's picture or image of their universe, or world, is that on which they base their daily decisions. This picture or image is made up of many smaller images out of which they operate from day to day. These images are constantly in flux as they make decisions each day in response to their situation. These images fill the gap between the idea they have about something and the actual situation. All of a person's past experience figures in the image, and although there is often rational clarity about major images there is obviously a great deal of subconscious imagery which influences daily life. People are seldom self-conscious about the images out of which they operate. The task of imaginal education in this regard is to work with these basic operating images rather than with ideas or information which may be only tangentially related to the operating image.

The critical aspect to apprehend relative to the operating image of a human being, whether it be conscious or unconscious, rational or irrational, happy or sad, useful or destructive, is that it is not necessarily true, but is what its possessor believes to be true. It therefore carries the weight of absolute truth for the one whose image it is. In imaginal education messages are intentionally directed to these images, with the knowledge that messages by their very nature are often rejected, that they can be partially taken in, and that they can be received, affirmed and become part of the operating image to which they are directed.

In the case of the participants in the Training, Incorporated program, the most often encountered operating image out of which they live is one of an unneeded, unwanted, unskilled, and therefore unhelpful human being. This operating image, though unconscious with most, is the primary influence in their relationship to themselves, to their families, the community at large, and to any possibility of employment.

B. Images Determine Behavior

Contrary to notions that heredity and environment are the determining factors in who we are, the operating image out of which a person lives is that determining factor. It is not our basic abilities, our training, or our ideas about life. Illustrations of this fact range from the ludicrous to the profound. Everyone has heard of the person who thinks he can fly, and proceeds to jump from a tall building. Though it is obvious to the rest of us that we can not fly, his operating image allows him to act as if he can. Put another way, what one believes to be the case determines how one acts.

For the majority of the participants in Training, Inc. the determination of their behavior by their operating image is depressingly significant. Personal and family contingencies often work against employment. Approximately half of the participants are dependent on tax-funded financial support. Lack of reliable transportation or accessible child care hinder mobility and place stress on limited financial resources. Major illness which takes participants out of training for extended periods of time is not uncommon; nor is family resistance to finding employment, whether due to children's needs, or cultural backgrounds. All of these block the participant, but it is the operating image which directs the participant's responses to those realities.

In nine out of ten cases, the responses to blocks that impede job procurement are responses of "paralysis"--the feeling that they are at the mercy of externally imposed limitations. They become victims of circumstance, refuse to deal realistically with objective blocks or to initiate responsible action to circumvent or override them.

As a result of the operating image of victimization, participants enter the job market (or training program) with career goals that are sometimes based on illusory self-understandings. For example, there are students who will enter the training program believing that it will be a cure-all; the job objective might be one that is beyond their immediate reach, like becoming an executive secretary to a lawyer, when what needs to be considered is the necessity of taking an entry level position and working through a promotion system. Or the example of the 70 word-per-minute typist aiming for a file clerk/light typist job out of the story that no one hires someone who has not worked for twenty years.

C. Images_Change

Imaginal education's product is the assumption of responsibility for one's own images. This is based on the fact that one's images can and do change, leaving the question of whether exterior or interior forces control the change. Training, Inc. is the objective force that consciously encourages the change from dependence on objective forces (advertising, peer pressure, etc.) to interior forces where the trainee is in control of his own self-selected imagery.

Although much is done by Training, Inc. with direct methods, it is clear that the effective technique to bring about the above change must involve a high degree of indirection. When new images or messages impact people, calling their old images into question, they are threatened. Sometimes the threat is so profound that the risk involved in changing the old for a new image permits only tentative change. At other points less risk is presented and a new image and new behavior are readily apparent. But indirection is invaluable when dealing with a person's deep-seated values. And in the case of so many trainees in Training, Inc. subtle forces must be brought to bear on the self image which will otherwise keep them untrained and unemployed if unchanged.

One means of determining the decisional shift taking place in the trainees' images is to observe the change in their dress and appearance. It is apparent that many of these students put a great value on dressing in the latest style, which usually somewhat outstrips the style approved for the office. They experience the dress code of business as a painful one to meet. So it has become to the staff a sign of maturity to see the students wearing acceptable office attire. One of the ways of encouraging this has been to point out that they do not have to change their taste in clothing, they have only to adjust its appropriateness for certain settings.

It has been pointed out that no one can finally change the images of another person; yet it is possible to hold up a mirror for another person to re-examine his own images. it is also essential that alternative and more effective images be demonstrated as this imaginal process takes place. A recent graduate spoke of this image change in the following way:

What has happened to me since I have been in this program? Well, a lot of different things. First, and maybe most important to me, is that I gained confidence in myself. I think that is because the skills I've learned, though not perfect, have made me aware that I do have something to offer a company. I've made up my mind to let nothing stand in the way of accomplishing something worthwhile in my life.

Another graduate wrote the staff:

My level of awareness was enhanced beyond my own belief. I became more aware of things inside of myself--my faults, negative feelings, positive thoughts, and skills....It gave me the opportunity to exercise my knowledge of people, broaden my knowledge of interrelationships, deal with co-workers and staff. I'm changed in more ways than words can express: my skills, or should I say my abilities, were further enlarged--skills I thought I never could master; a significant change has occurred in my basic attitude and outlook on my life, and (on the lives of) others.

Perhaps the following quotation best exemplifies the change in image the staff endeavors to make possible:

Before I came here I was totally lost, no hope for any kind of job position....They gave me the opportunity to help myself so when I do go out to look for a job I have the possibility of getting one.

The image participants develop of their real abilities, their appropriated past and the possible future spills over to their whole life. Very often the trainees' physical appearance is a key sign of this. Sponsors of the program have often commented that the class at graduation time looks like an entirely different group than that which entered the program twelve weeks earlier.

D. Images are Discerned

The pivotal "image" problem in the target urban population this program serves is that of self-depreciation, or the victim image. The image which the staff holds out to every participant is one of appropriated greatness, that all know themselves as unique people who have the possibility of creating their own future as they operate within the limits of their particular situation and abilities. But the staff can not be satisfied with the generalist's opinion concerning the participants in the program. Each trainee has a unique past, and has developed a set of responses to that situation. The staff encounters the trainees as whole units and attempts to change that whole through self-conscious and intentional use of messages.

They observe the behavior of the trainee and the group to discover basic operating images, for to know the operating image is to know the real person. In imaginal education the trainer additionally operates out of an image of what the students need to learn, and has a fairly specific picture of what they will be able to know and do at the end of the course. Once their basic capabilities are established, and it is determined that they have no mechanical or mental difficulties blocking acquisition of skills, the task is to bridge the gap between the operating image and the trainers' image of what it is possible to become.

The trainees do not differ from most people--they tend to assume that their lives are the result of some impersonal process evolving out of the industrial revolution which gave people technical possibilities and mechanically determined and determines their images.

This last basic assumption in imaginal education implies that all are responsible for their own imagery. They can self-consciously grasp their own images, as well as those of others around them, and they change their own images. One of the curriculum events devised to address this is the creation of a life timeline. The trainees identify their long range goals and realize the manner in which what they do now affects the reaching of that goal. Each day then becomes an opportunity to deal with the blocks which confront them, rather than just another day.

III. THE GOALS OF IMAGINAL EDUCATION

The human imagination is involved in all forms of thinking and learning. Imaginal Education aims at enabling the trainee to discover and create images of themselves in their real world which will motivate them to intelligent and responsible involvement in society. It is images which offer the deep personal permission to be and to do. They are the guide, the force, and the critic of our sense of personal integrity and vocational accomplishment.

Imaginal teaching methods are crucial in a time when the world's impingements on people are such that they all too often collapse in the face of complexity, or create some way to escape dealing with it. The cost of living alone raises such a question for the working mother, who can not comprehend how she can adequately support herself and her family. The same question is raised for the young single who can not imagine how he or she will "get a start," or "go somewhere" in a job.

Imaginal education as used in the program of Training, Inc. intends to awaken, expand and furbish the image-making capacity, and thereby to release people to effective living. In the words of one trainer, "What is needed is reconstruction of life attitudes, a re-education of the imagination."

A trainee in the training program responded to the question, "If you could be the person you want to be..., " with the following thoughts.

I would...start my life over again from 1977. That year I got pregnant and I was not ready for a child. I am dealing with the situation like I should but it could have been better for me and my child. I want to be a person with something, and who could be something. That is why I am here today because I know I do better than I was doing by sitting at home all day. I wanted a skill to be somebody so I could go out and make a living for that little girl I wanted. I am young and I know I am able to do what I want to do. You know, it's funning, I don't want to work just for money; I want work for entertainment, that's another reason I am here. I just graduated from high school and I stayed home every day after school started this fall and I started to get sick. I'm a person who doesn't get sick and I found out I was getting sick for not doing anything in the run of a day. I need something to do, and this is what I wanted to do--come and get me some training, and...you are making me and my mother very proud. My mother, because I finally did something, and me, my troubles are over. I

have something to do that keeps my whole day occupied. Sorry about all the "ands" but this is for real. It might not make sense. I hope this is the start of my life.

Whatever this process be called--motivational, contextual, attitudinal or imaginal education--a new dimension is being added to our concept of learning.

There are four broad goals in imaginal education which respond to the need in society today for a depth address in the midst of dehumanizing conditions, particularly for the urban person whatever his or her age.

A. Creation of Adequate Images

The typical trainee at Training, Inc. operates out of some variation of one of these four sentences:

"I can't move because I am inadequate."

"The world is too complex for me to understand what to do."

"The past has already determined what I can do."

"All alternatives to doing something different are closed, or won't work."

The staff is constantly faced with the challenge of discerning what images of themselves, their world, their capabilities, the trainees operate out of. If the trainee's image of inadequacy comes from the fact that they never had learned a skill, they are taught skills. And to make certain that they have an image of excellence rather than one of "make do," feedback from the trainer on mistakes and more preferable ways to do this work come immediately on turning it in. The work is not accepted by the trainer until it has been taken back by the trainee and corrected. Thus everyone in the class has the opportunity to do excellent work. No grades are given. "You are your only competition."

The entire setting of the school combats the image of self-depreciation which comes from not having been treated as a significant or worthwhile person. The trainer's daily attire, always that of the business world, creates a sense of dignity in the classroom that is carried over into the trainee's life. The requirement of attention to the dress code assumed in most businesses supports that effort. And the setting, with order and organization, even to the way the trainee's materials are provided and ready for each session, supports the image that they are engaged in important work.

An underlying assumption at Training, Inc. is that the program is operated like a business. This attitude does more than an single thing to prepare the trainee with adequate images for operating in the business world. Attendance and punctuality, dress and decorum, all are what the standard business would expect. A recent episode illustrates the impact on the trainee. An ordinarily prompt trainee was late fifteen minutes every day for more than a week. When asked what had occasioned this, he responded that he was responsible for his sister's children while she was in the hospital, and the child care center to which he took them daily not open at a time which allowed him to get to school on time. The trainer responded, "Don't you know that you would have been fired if you had not explained this tardiness on the job?" The trainee answered, "But if I had been on a job I would have told the boss." To which the trainer responded, "This is your job."

B. Reordering Life Experiences

The starting point in imaginal education is the life experience of those involved. These trainees frequently are victimized by past failures and have a difficult time seeing past experiences as any kind of positive or useful learning experience. Help is needed to enable the reinterpretation of the past in light of long and short range goals. For instance, one who has worked as a waitress may image herself as having nothing to sell a prospective employer. A conversation with her reveals that she has learned to work with all kinds of people, handle money, train other waitresses and be on time. These are all marketable skills. but the retelling of her story about herself is necessary before she can appropriate this experience.

The same type of re-ordering occurs with the young man who has been employed by Mcdonald's. Having been a window boy comes to him as demeaning when he is faced with the prospect of seeking another job, but discussion of the learnings of that situation and finding a dignified way to talk about them gives him a new starting point.

This course offers the participants an opportunity to reflect on their experience, and gives an opportunity to decide to take a new relationship to it. These trainees have most often been faced with continuing difficulties in their day-to-day lives, and can talk about the hard time they have had. They have the capacity to see, with the support of the group as it looks at this experience in conversation or reflection on a workshop, that they have conquered countless difficulties, developed great resiliency and become more understanding people for having had this experience.

C. Calling_Forth_Decision

The reconstruction of life attitudes which goes on in the course of the training experience is marked by large and small decisions on the part of the trainee. Not the least of these is that of deciding to be present and on time for each day's class. This type of stability is not a common experience for the trainee. The staff must constantly require decisions to be present. The trainees are called when they do not appear in class. When they respond with car trouble as the reason for their absence, the trainer asks, "Is there any possibility of using public transportation? Could your neighbor possibly drop by for you today? Have you called any of the other trainees for a ride?"

It is crucial that the trainees operate firmly out of their real situation, not out of some wish dream about their lives, and on that basis create their models for the future. Trainees are continually called upon to work through creative solutions to their own problems by asking them a series of reflective questions. Eventually trainees learn to internalize this problem solving method and apply it to the personal situations which might otherwise cripple their employability.

This may involve organizing the day's time so they can both be present for all classes and pay utilities bills as well. But thinking ahead so that they can achieve both of these goals requires a decision about themselves, their capabilities, their loyalties, their commitments, and their future, none of which can be treated lightly by the staff. For the trainees who have become conscious of their selfhood realize that each decision is a decision about that selfhood. The decision to press on in an arena where they have not succeeded, as typing has proven to be for many trainees, is a decision with implications for all of their life. Or put another way, the decision about what they will do, whether it is attendance in class, or choosing a career path, is an opportunity to fulfill their most ambitious goals.

But decision is not only a matter of sticking to the decision. It has to do with intentional planning as well. Once trainees have chosen long range goals they were asked to write down the practical intermediate steps to achieving it, and thus to begin operating consciously toward that goal. Striking changes have been set in trainees who decided that they could plan a future that includes caring for a family, working, and becoming self-sustaining.

D. Releasing Depth Motivity

One of the most notable aspects of the Training, Inc. program has been and continues to be the depth motivity it releases in its trainees. The overall curriculum is divided into three sections: eight weeks of building skills, two weeks of applying these skills; and four weeks for refining skills. The content and rhythm of the course are planned to allow the possibility of engendering and releasing the depth motivity of the trainee. When trainees are engaged in something vital to their existence, like their future employability, it is not difficult to have their attention. Being able to keep on with this, succeeding in learning and doing the skills they need to acquire, these are more complicated. The staff of Training, Inc. is experienced in methods to both create new motivity in the trainees and provide opportunities for the release of new motivity.

The "no grades" style of the program makes trainees their own competitors; it illuminates a new perspective on their abilities to use their own gifts. Tests and grades do not become the decisive factors in determining their ability. The opportunity to re-do work until they achieve an accurate tally or a mailable copy is a challenge in itself.

Another motivating factor has been an intentional interruption of the time schedule which can allow a new relationship to be taken to what is happening. Celebrations placed in the time design may shift the trainees' mood and allow them to see the situation anew as a gift, making it possible to look at the future with anticipation. They can even come to enjoy the unexpected. This past spring the group was experiencing the drain of routine, with the added burden of holiday preparation and pressure of many things to be done. A time design for the week was posted which included something new in each curriculum block and a surprise on the last day of the week. All began to anticipate the surprise, questioning everyone as to what it would be. They were surprised to find it was a birthday party where everyone was recognized and honored, not just those who had birthdays in that week.

Undoubtedly the office setting of the program is motivating. Numerous offices surround the trainees. The trainees do not have to wait until their training is ended to know what the office setting is--they are already in it. Additionally, the simulated office style breaks the image of the traditional classroom and releases trainees to new beginnings. They repeatedly have the opportunity to assume a new role and take a new risk; with the supportive structure of the program they learn to succeed and become more willing and able in the next situation. Their sustained motivity has often been said to be the result of accomplishment in a real situation.

IV. THE CURRICULUM

Jerome Bruner says that anyone can be taught anything at any age as long as it is taught in his world view and with his language. Following on this premise, the curriculum of Training, Inc. is in the first instance contentless; it takes its content out of that which is going on in the trainees' lives. It deals with three basic questions under the overall goal of creating an employable person. They are:

1. What are my limits in this situation?
(or what am I up against?)
2. What are my possibilities?
(or how can I face it?)
3. How can I creatively participate here?
(or what is an adequate style of response?)

Urban people are faced with perhaps more than their share of a chaotic existence. The seeming impossibility of survival faces them with the struggle to make sense out of life and to give order to the chaos in which they constantly find themselves. Jean Piaget describes this process as one a child goes through in acquiring ways to operate, or ideas necessary for coping with the world. Adults facing the ambiguities of the world situation are pushed to create relationships of meaning out of complex experiences, and the method of living they come up with is significant for their entire lifetime.

Curriculum functions as that symbolic structure which enables the individual to put temporal order on the chaos and yet it must be comprehensive, internally consistent and open-ended enough to allow for the changing world and the new relationships required to be taken to it.

Four helpful presuppositions concerning the learning process are articulated by Jerome Bruner in his book, The Process of Education. Many contemporary educational theorists advocate this approach to curriculum.

1. The structure, not the content, of a discipline is the key to comprehension and retention.
2. Any subject can be taught at any age. The process of learning is the same throughout life.
3. Creative investigation requires the exploration of hunches and guesses, and this activity must be encouraged throughout the educational process.
4. True motivation for learning comes not from external reward but rather from accomplishment within the learning situation.

The curriculum attempts to deal with the total life experience of the trainee and consists of four main arenas. It is based on the assumption that the instructor has decided what kind of skilled person the curriculum can produce and knows how to teach it. The four curriculum areas attempt to provide the data and experiences to actualize these assumptions.

A. Basic Curriculum

The basic curriculum includes the skills of typing, accounting office procedures and data/word processing.

1. Typing. In typing, learning the keyboard is accomplished and skill drills are initially tested with one minute timings. To begin with, five minute timings would defeat the participant. Technique, control, speed and accuracy are taught in the early weeks of the course. In production, typing trainees learn how to use business forms, tabulation, centering, statistical typing and composition of letters and memos. A packet of materials designed to help refine skills already learned teaches correction techniques and machine manipulation. Called Snow Country, it emphasizes the use of proper business forms and requires composition.

2. Accounting. The use of a calculator by touch is taught to every trainee in the opening weeks of the course. Everyone masters it and thus starts out on the same footing. In record keeping, trainees learn how to record particular data, how to transfer data, and are drilled in accuracy.

Two packets enable further development of skill. Mountain View works on bookkeeping in terms of recording source documents, using the combination journey, doing the payroll and keeping a check book. In the Professions Packet trainees learn how to post to a general ledger, do the monthly work sheet, prepare monthly reports and maintain records in an audit-ready condition.

Here again, individual pacing, attention to accuracy, and the method of having trainees check their own work before turning it in to the trainer permits the already ambitious trainee to move rapidly if desired.

3. Office Procedures. One of the key tools in learning office procedures is having the trainees assume the role of receptionist for Training, Inc. They receive guests, answer the telephone and take memos for personnel. Office Procedures is taught in three units. The first covers the principles of alphabetic and numeric filing, and considerations for how a filing system can be set-up and

efficiently maintained. Another unit focuses on the use of the business telephone. The third unit covers human relations skills. This deals with ways to clarify the values out of which they are operating, does an assessment of their goals, and provides means for appraising their performance in overall office skills and style. Many helpful procedures have been introduced in this course: an auction with "money" so that each trainee can bid on the things he or she values; a long-range goal workshop which gives the opportunity to look at the future as well as the more immediate concerns involved in becoming employable; and, a non-verbal communications role playing session.

4. Data Entry and Word Processing are taught using micro computers. Trainees become computer literate and "friendly users" of a variety of software packages. The final test of their word processing skill comes in preparing their own resume.

B. Supporting Skills

Development of skills in keyboarding, accounting and office procedures would resemble what is possible in many commercial training programs if it were not accompanied by two other critical elements in the curriculum: basics refinement and career development.

1. Basics Refinement. Basics refinement includes an aspect of remedial teaching in that it covers business math (fractions, decimals, percentages, and the use of a calculator), and business English. English includes vocabulary and spelling (with attention to commonly misspelled words, as well as word division); speech and grammar. A valuable tool in dealing with grammar, vocabulary, spelling and speech has been immediate feedback from the trainer which helps set a standard of performance which most of the trainees are capable of meeting.

Personal appearance is dealt with indirectly throughout the course. At times, individual issues need to be dealt with privately between a trainer and a trainee. The expectation of meeting a code of business dress is set early in the program and trainees find it helpful to experiment with what they would be comfortable in wearing for their future job.

One young man repeatedly came to class with his shirttail hanging outside his trousers. Suggestions that he tuck it in were ignored. Finally he replied, "This is the style." One of the staff asked if he would go out into the corridor and led him to the doors of two other companies on that floor. The staff person asked if he saw anyone with a shirttail out. When he answered, "No", the staff member said, "See, the style in the business world is different."

Thereafter that young man dressed as a company would expect him to dress with his shirt tucked in his trousers.

2. Career Development. A section of curriculum on career planning deals with the development of long range goals, with more immediate career plans, and with the steps necessary to reach these goals. It also interprets the work history of each trainee as a way of screening what has actually been learned in past job experience (or school or voluntary activities). They plot a career path which gives them a practical picture of where they intend to go and how it might be done.

The arena of personal management is dealt with when the trainee looks at life goals and a life timeline. This wider context removes some of the press of the immediate situation. They work on financial resources and their management of them --both what they presently have and what they expect to make on the job. Time management allows a new perspective on issues which sometimes intrude in the course of a job and may prove disruptive.

Office styles are dealt with in imaginative ways: the current popularity of "body language" is a way of expressing the power of non-verbal communication and is reviewed in a film, followed by a conversation. Listening skills and following instructions correctly are encouraged in every class. A working wardrobe is the subject of one seminar conducted by staff or a commercial grooming consultant.

The period at the end of the course devoted to the job search is one of the most interesting to the trainees. They are taught interviewing skills, are video-taped doing a simulated interview, then are critiqued on their performance. They learn to build a resume appropriate to the job being sought. They are taught techniques of searching for an appropriate job. They learn telephone technique and the use of the newspaper in reviewing available openings. During this period they are actually seeking and having interviews, and on their return they write letters which are sent to the person who interviewed them. Such letter writing has resulted in several persons securing a job who might have otherwise been overlooked.

C. Personal Development

Curriculum based on imaginal education theory requires attention to the psychological and relational aspects of the trainees' lives, as well as on the basic skills they must master.

1. In dealing with people of other ages or basic business tools, more weight might be given to the relational aspect of curriculum. In Training, Inc.'s program the fundamental

relationship of the trainees to themselves is dealt with through the imaginal curriculum, which we will discuss later; the relationship with the company, the family and the community is dealt with in Career Development. The issue here is to make certain that they are aware of their relatedness, and this is done through discussion, events, and activity in the classroom. These enable the trainees to stand objectively before those relationships which strongly influence their lives. One recent class had a picnic in which the dynamic of the office party was played out. The reluctance of all to actually do the entertainment they had prepared revealed the fear of risk before their peers which the staff had earlier perceived. But, seeing the staff in a new relationship to them in their informal attire, and singing as a way to encourage them to risk as well, allowed the trainees to both risk themselves and affirm their fellow trainees as they did the same.

2. Psychological. A curriculum with strong elements of the psychological toward dealing with their individual drives and responses to life: awareness of their physical needs and drives, awareness of their sociality (which is much akin to the relational curriculum) and awareness of their rationality, their desire to know who they are and what the meaning of their particular existence is. This program deals with the psychological primarily through individual conversations with the trainee, where individual response is emphasized and affirmed, where their creativity is acknowledged and reflected upon. But this also takes place for the total group in group discussion.

D. Imaginal Curriculum

1. Intent. Trainees require not only models of their external environment, in this case the business world they seek to enter, but images of themselves in relation to that model. To possess a concept of a complex company, for instance, is not sufficient. In such an environment they must image themselves as adept and adaptable people in order to respond adequately and creatively in that company. The imaginal curriculum, therefore, is not intended to depict some ideal personality patterns that can be readily duplicated. Rather, its aim is to "set off explosions" in the interior of the trainee's lives that will reverberate throughout their consciousness and imagination to release their imaging power, to awaken images of significant selfhood, to elicit the courage for creative living, to provide the tools for critical reflection, and to develop concern for responsible participation in the job they seek and in society of which they are a part.

2. Focus. The imaginal curriculum arena is concerned with the trainee's personal development and their

decisional relationships. It provides images of adequate role models and positive self images; its intent is to keep open the belief that the trainees can learn and can make decisions about life rather than being victimized by people and new situations.

It uses a problem solving method to gain a new perspective on operating images. It employs the trainer's use of short courses, often one sentence, which serve as reminders of images of possibility in situations where trainees are constantly confronting impossibility.

The imaginal curriculum deals with the self image which has kept the trainee unskilled, uneasy with the business world, and uncertain of capabilities. Its intent is to objectify the inadequacies of the trainee, and in the naming to have created a way to overcome the inadequacies. It focuses on limits, possibilities and freedom to make new decisions about every arena of life. Because the staff has experienced numerous trainees, it can now predict their progress and the hazardous points in their journey through the curriculum. The staff has developed a series of short courses in four categories: the trainee experiencing limits, the trainee facing possibilities, the trainee at a point of decision, and the trainee and work.

The conversational nature of these short courses belies the cruciality of their role in injecting and sustaining positive and adequate self images for the trainee. A recently returned trainee mentioned how much the public needed to hear what she had heard repeatedly as a trainee: "Read your directions." She went on to comment: "I know now what you meant when you said it was important." Repetition is not only necessary; it is critical in allowing trainees to appropriate new operating models as their own.

3. Tools. The short course is just one of the many tools used in imaginal education. Others are referred to on the tools chart which is included, and the selected short courses included give an image of how short these are intended to be.

V. THE METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS IN IMAGINAL EDUCATION

Perhaps even more important than the content of imaginal education are the methodological assumptions. Sound commercial training can be found in many programs, but the graduates vary widely in their degree of preparedness for the business world. Following is a description of the four basic assumptions which differentiate the program of Training, Inc. from other programs.

A. Based on Life Experience

The imaginal educator creates the bridge between the current operating images of the trainees and the self image seen as adequate for their participation in the business world. The educator's basic assumption is that beginning with the experiences familiar to the trainee one can create such bridges.

The necessity of this base is that any trainee is threatened by new information to be learned, because it represents a change which the trainee will be required to make in him/herself. It is admittedly difficult to begin with common life experience in typing if the trainees do not know how to type. But conversation prior to the actual instruction, even on the first day, can establish a more open atmosphere before what might be an intimidating experience with a new machine.

Educators have been known to respond with dismay when vital information seemed to completely escape trainees in the learning situation. Comprehension of the intricate way "in" to the trainees' mind would reveal the reasons, at least partially, for such lack of communication. Sensing the actual context in which trainees are operating is key to the educator's success in teaching, and requires attention, openness, and experience. Imaginal educators insist on the mode of team teaching to facilitate and sustain this effort of continuously working with the trainees' context.

But sensing the context, or discerning the operating image out of which the trainee lives, is what allows the educator to choose life experiences both positive and familiar for the trainee. With such images in hand, and a familiar experience in mind, the educator always has an opportunity to gain the attention of the trainee, and then to begin the educational process.

B. Utility of the Art Form and Serious Conversation

Imaginal education understands art as deeply human. "It is in no wise simply a distraction for the leisure class at the end of an era. Actually its most crucial contribution is made at the beginning of a new age such as the present

moment. The art of a people is the means whereby old and inadequate common images are challenged. It is the catalyst through which fresh, useful pictures of existence are forged. Works of art both mirror and create human experience. They interpret the external times and disclose the unnoticed internal states of being. They enable one to be present to, to comprehend and to act out his/her deepest experience. People are addressed by art not because it communicates what they do not know, but because it occasions an awakening of what they do know in a latent, incomplete and disguised fashion. It induces the sober dialogue of the self with the self that inaugurates or releases selfhood."

So stated a staff member of the Institute of Cultural Affairs in a report on research done by that group in the sixties on the use of art as a teaching medium. Because of this power to occasion and inform our self reflection, art has indispensable value for the education of the imaginal. Art itself, however, is in need of an ally in fulfilling this function; serious conversation.

In give-and-take dialogue, the manner in which the art object addresses the individual is clarified, empowered and expanded. The very articulation of our impressions does something to them. Expressed images are especially compelling. Putting them into words before the hearing of fellow trainees gives added force to the inner reflection. The fellow trainees' reaction to them, negative or positive, adds yet another quality. Serious conversation about art is not about the art object as such, but about the way it addresses us as persons. And in the process further self-awareness and knowledge emerges; more clarity comes to the self.

The program of Training, Inc. makes use of numerous art forms, many of which are not the standard "artistic" forms. For instance, at the end of the first day, trainees participate in an art form conversation concerning the day itself. Weekly conversations on the program take the same form. These conversations treat time and space as an art form.

Another illustration is provided by the conversation held after field trips; a visit to a bank will be capped off by conversation recalling the objective happenings, the class' reflection on these, and their interpretation of the event. Similarly, films used in the curriculum are followed by art form conversations to allow reflection on that happening. Book reviews the trainees prepare are another form of solitary conversation with artistic material.

The method used for the intentional structuring of a person's response to the messages received from art is called the art form method. It is not an artificial

imposition, but rather a self-conscious ordering of the way life is experienced by participants. The method is contentless in that it can be applied to any situation through asking questions at four levels; the objective, the reflective, the interpretive and the decisional. At the objective level the intent is simply to see what the data is, what is present in the objective situation. At the reflective level becoming aware of each person's subjective response to the situation is the goal. The next step, the interpretive, is to consider the meaning and purpose of the situation and an adequate statement or response to the situation. Finally, a decision must be made about how to relate to the situation and to one's self in that situation. The chart included gives a set of possible questions which can be used with various art forms.

C. The Transferable Nature of Problem Solving and Contradiction Discernment

Trainees are continually called upon to work through creative solutions to their problems. The staff uses the problem solving method to be described here in situations it faces in the training departments with trainees, and indirectly conveys how it might be used by the trainees in many situations. When trainees come to a staff member with a problem they are led through this process as a way to allow them to see for themselves that they have the solution to their own issues. During the Human Relations (sometimes called Office Relations) course they do an individual assessment during which they and the staff critique their work performance, punctuality and attendance, grooming and attitude. Their strengths and weaknesses and the evaluation they give themselves are then reviewed and a six point plan is worked out with them to deal with selected items. The procedures used in this exercise become a guide for future problem solving ventures.

A close connection exists between the method used to solve problems in this training program and the art form method. To explain:: the first step in solving a problem is to identify and objectify the actual situation. In an art form conversation the first step is also intended to objectify. Then in the conversation reflection on the situation allows participants to become aware of the relational aspects of the situation. In problem solving the second step is to identify the real block that stands in their way; this requires evaluation of elements that are part of the situation and discernment of sometimes subtle relationships between the elements. The fundamental block is the contradiction that must be dealt with to solve the problem.

The interpretive level of conversation begins to bring self-consciousness to possible significance given by the participants to the situation. In problem solving at this point possible alternative actions are considered.

At the decisional level in the conversation, a determination is reached by the participants as to the personal significance the situation has for them. In problem solving an alternative is chosen.

The transferable nature of problem solving thus described is a primary concern. The method is open-ended since there is no predetermined solution to the life situations in which participants find themselves. It calls on the participants to use their rationality and intuitive powers, and provides an orderly way to consider a problematic issue. Tools such as this provide the practical means for responsible participation in the business community.

It is the possibility of isolating a contradiction which most motivates trainees to put this method into action in their everyday living. When they can discern what blocks their path whether it is their career path or the way to pay next month's rent, they are already on the way to a solution. For, once named, the contradiction commands their attention and they waste no effort or energy on other aspects of the situation.

D. New Images Require Reinforcement

The image of themselves as successful is one the participants find unfamiliar though appealing. As the weeks of the program go by and they see themselves accomplishing the tasks set before them, they gain confidence. One of the early devices to instill confidence is teaching everyone to use the ten-key calculator. This establishes a common base of accomplishment on which each participant builds.

The staff uses every opportunity to acknowledge the gifts each participant has. It is not a simple thing to do. Participants arrive with anger and hostility directed at everyone, including themselves. Past experiences with schooling have often left them embittered, and untaught. But their continuing decision to remain in the program, though their anger and hostility persist, does compel admiration and the staff seeks ways to honor that decision.

Continuing reinforcement of images of adequacy, capability, success and winning is communicated to the trainees. It occurs in individual conversation with the staff, or in the encounter with a quotation posted in their lounge. A signal reinforcing event is the taking of the class picture. This is done about halfway through the course; they see themselves mirrored in the group and can image completing the course with the group. As graduation approaches names of the trainees and the companies which hire them are posted in the facility. This serves to reinforce the winning image they have begun to claim. It also allows the entire group to celebrate with each trainee as they secure positions.

The most powerful event that supports the image of success is the graduation luncheon. Guests from sponsoring agencies and companies attend. Trainees receive diplomas which symbolize a life accomplishment in proficiency. Trainees report to the sponsors on their experience in the training program. One guest from the business community congratulates them and welcomes them to the business world.

At one graduation the speaker gave a creative talk on "Success" summarizing the key points made in the program, and thus made graduation a training event for the graduates. It is important to make the transition from training to working. For many it is a first experience with a business luncheon; they have a chance to talk with presidents, managers and personnel directors. Each trainees' special qualities are enumerated publically as they receive their diplomas. Confidence is renewed and the story about who they are, what they have experienced, and where they are headed is articulated. The event provides an imaginal picture of themselves which trainees have later reported is a pivotal one for them as they launch into their career.

The companies represented are impressed with the power of the event. They become advocates among the others already existing in the business community for Training, Inc. for what it offers the disadvantaged unemployed, and for the service it provides to the business community.

VI. THE LEARNINGS OF TRAINING, INC.

The clerical training done in the program of Training, Inc. is innovative and successful. In attempting to articulate the way in which imaginal education theory and practices have been employed in the program, the author has appreciated the assistance of the Chicago and DuPage staff personnel. The learnings which follow come from the experience of both groups, and are the author's understanding of the pivotal insights which they have gained.

Since imaginal education does not conceptualize in advance of the teaching what its product will be, but rather creates a context in which the participant has the opportunity to choose from among the images available to him/her, it is somewhat difficult, if not impossible to speak of "learnings". If imaginal education began with the premise that it could, and did, conceptualize what the trainee would become on the other side of the training, it would be just like old education methods. A trainee either would, or would not, be what you intended that he/she be. The trainer's image of what trainees should become would either be superimposed, or it would not. And that kind of product would be easily documentable, with little or no room left for conversation on the point.

In contrast to this, the author presumes that learnings in imaginal education can only be supported by evidence offered, and the evidence may not in the mind of other support the learning. You can point to change that takes place in the trainee. It has been the most convincing evidence to the business community at large that the training thus far is useful.

The five learnings discussed here are those which seem to the author to be key points in the uniqueness of the program, and are admittedly not final conclusions. They are learnings with which all the personnel of Training, Inc. are intrigued because of their implications for education in general.

A. It is the responsibility of the trainer to create the ways the trainees can learn. This has been the learning which by far has most influenced the staff in its day-to-day operation. It is in opposition to the assumption that fate decides who can learn and who cannot. The staff readily admitted that this last statement is often considered as they face classrooms full of people who find it enormously difficult to learn. Their trainees probably are the group in any situation which would find it virtually impossible to learn.

The staff has found that every preconceived idea that they had about how people can learn, and cannot learn, had to be given up. The trainees represent a society which has been impacted by powerful media for many years; they are accustomed to entertainment rather than pedagogy. Their encounters with education seem to have been negative, and they are only predisposed to be distrustful of the attempt to educate them .

Every class would have some trainees who cannot follow verbal instructions at all. Once it is established that they have no hearing problem, the obstacles before the trainer could seem so formidable that nothing happens to see that the trainee gains training from the experience. But if this were allowed to happen, the classroom would soon be empty. The staff has learned that they must come up with new and imaginative ways to get the attention of the trainee and keep it. Their motto has become "if they don't hear what you're saying, it's your fault."

It may be that this learning has become a new operating assumption for the staff. It certainly carries as much weight as any other single learning they report, and results in the kind of classroom activity discussed in many of the previous sections of this paper.

B. The modern office setting is a key factor in the participants' decision to be in the program, and is of inestimable value in preparing them for the business community. The general lack of success which accompanies the program's participants to Training, Inc. is attributed at least in part by them to their past experience with education. A recent trainee, on learning she was accepted for the program asked where the school was. When told that she was in it, she replied that that couldn't be the case because no school had ever made her feel so good. Negative feedback from trainees about education is offset by the office setting, and creates the opportunity for their openness to what will happen in the setting.

This setting is also reinforcing to the self imagery they encounter which suggests that it is possible to be confident and worthwhile. The trainees are expected to dress and conduct themselves in a manner appropriate for the business world, thus at the most practical level they become familiar with the office setting, and comfortable within it. The physical setting allows the contextual setting to have influence: the requirements of punctuality and attendance take on a different significance here and can be taken with a new seriousness.

The setting also engenders excitement and anticipation relative to the big step that seeking employment is to these trainees. Many of them have only looked at work as unpleasant, and they can for the first time imagine how it could be pleasant. And the modern office setting is directly responsible for that.

C. Without the trainers' attention to the objective and subjective journey through the program, the trainees will not complete it. This is in contrast to teaching only the objective curriculum material with which the trainer is charged. The trainees in this program are undoubtedly difficult trainees, but they additionally bring to the program a myriad of personal issues which influence their performance in the program.

The subjective aspects of their participation in the program at times become so overwhelming for them that they stop making progress in learning the practical skills, or stop attending. Although the staff must carefully not intrude on their privacy they do have to pay attention to how they are functioning, and often the trainees bring the staff's attention to what we are here calling the "subjective".

The assumption that you are dealing with the whole trainee when you prepare him or her for participation in the business community might seem to posit attention to both the objective and subjective aspects of his being in the program. But the staff suggests that their success with trainees is dependent on their having created objective formats for reviewing trainees' progress and attitude which allow the staff to deal with this not only when it arises, but when it is anticipated to cause the class anxiety. The staff's experience has been that complex personal situations and responses to what is going on in their lives is as motivating an influence on the trainees as is their enthusiasm for the program. Response to these circumstances is seen in the structured flexibility of the curriculum.

D: A corporate staff, disciplined in doing regular planning and evaluation, is crucial if the program is to succeed. All of the personnel were trained in the individualistic approach to teaching where they decided for themselves what to do in the classroom, and could not expect assistance from anyone. The staff of Training, Inc. has learned that the quality of the graduate depends on serious quarterly and weekly planning with time given daily to adjustments in daily plans if the necessity arises. This has made imperative the corporate meetings both before the teaching periods begin, many days over lunch, and checking signals at the end of the day.

Sensitivity to where the class is, difficulties it may be experiencing, special issues that come up, all these require the cooperation of the staff in addressing the trainees appropriately. And special issues are dealt with more supportively if the entire staff has concerned itself with what to do. The staff also find it more supportive of the difficult task they have in the classroom if they can discuss with their colleagues what to do in certain situations, and get their advice and/or assistance.

The teamwork approach creates a milieu which the trainees are quick to acknowledge, and create a consistency of approach which facilitates the trainees' progress. The interrelatedness of the curriculum, certainly as they will experience it on the job, is an additional factor which makes it productive to operate as a disciplined team.

E. The problem solving method used in the curriculum is, in fact, an education of the imagination. The problem solving method, as discussed at length in this paper, is a tool which the trainees use in many different ways. It is most often used by the trainers indirectly with them, but when it is explained to the class and they do exercises in it, they have the opportunity to objectify an experience which nearly all of them would have used in a conversation with the staff. They find they can articulate for themselves how to work through an issue. For persons who have had the operating imagery of one who is incapable of such creativity, this is a real breakthrough.

The manner in which the imagination could be said to be educated in this process is not at the point of "fanciful flights of fantasy" which some point to as the product of the imagination. It is rather indicative of the capacity to use their rationality and intuition to pull together their situation and assume responsibility themselves for what they choose to do with it. They find they have the capacity to reflect self-consciously on their own imagery and therefore have the power of it.

Appropriate flexibility is what one employer described as the characteristic he appreciated in a graduate he had employed. This is what the staff points to as education of the trainees' imagination.